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FASHION.

A POEM.

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FASHION:

OR,

A TRIP

TO A

FOREIGN C——T.

A POEM.

LONDON:

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MDCCLXXVII.

FASHION.

A POEM.

Varium et mutabile ſemper Fæmina. VIRG.

Quid rides? mutato nomine, de te
Fabula narratur. HORAT.

All hail, Moriah! ſtill exert your ſway,
Turn day to night, and night revert to day.

LIKE a mouſe 'n a cheeſe ſhall I nibble, and bite;
And tremble with fear, at approaching the light?
Well weening, alas! what misfortunes furround
The pupils of Phœbus on poetic ground;
What rocks, and what quickſands th' unwary await,
Attempting to ſail for the muſes eſtate;

Proud FORTUNE, I bid thee to ſtand at defiance;
I ſcorn your acquaintance, nor claim your alliance:
Cloſe hug her ye miſers, ſtill flatter and prize her,
Myſelf will live frugal, reſolv'd to deſpiſe her:
And altho' the vain world my ſtraits don't admit,
I reſt with content, and can feaſt on my bit.
If wonderful tales can't amuſe, or delight,
At leaſt I ſhall vent the mad paſſion to write.

It was on the nineteenth (as well I remember)
Of that moſt gloomy month, the month of December,
Urg'd on by a thirſt polite wiſdom to learn,
I left for a moment my moſs-rooft old barn;
New manners, new maxims, new modes to explore,
Reſolved to go, where I ne'er went before:
And ſince a good ſuit lay conceal'd in my cheſt,
(Oval buttons but wanting to render't dreſt)
I hurried my man to the taylor's abode,
My habit to faſhion, and trim a-la-mode:
For many a year undiſturb'd had it laid,
E'er ſince the Pretender did England invade.

Mon friſeur avançant en air et grimace,
Avec raſoir aiguiſé, ſmoothed my face.
With powder of orris, pomatum, a compound
Of hog's lard, and dog's lard, and tallow a pound;
With rank muſk, and roſe-water, moſt ſweetly blended,
And all the perfumes that India e'er vended,
By twiſting, and pinching, and burning my hair,
He ſet up my briſtles as rough as a bear.
The horſe-tail behind, ſuch a monſtrous huge pack,
He cram'd in a bourſe, or a bag, or a ſack.
Th' appearance of gentil t'aſſume to the tip,
My bright ſcoured ſword I girth'd on to my hip:
For no one can tell that frequents the great world,
How ſoon to deſtruction his ſoul may be hurld;
Tho' to fame, birth, fortune, you've greateſt pretence,
If honour be wanting, you want common-ſenſe.
Then a *chapeau de bras* my laquais did bring,
For a *chapeau de bras* is due to a ——.
Thus deck'd a-la-mode, in the glaſs I declare,
I ſcarcely could think 'twas myſelf I ſaw there:

Tho'

Tho' true in reflection, yet fill'd with ſurprize,
I hardly could credit my noſe, mouth, or eyes:
But as Eve, in the ſtream, when her charms ſh'admir'd,
Reluctant I turn'd; and with ſlow pace retired.
Next uprear'd in a chair, (as cuſtom's pretenſions)
And hoiſted on ſhoulders of mighty dimenſions,
My life at diſcretion ſwung floating between;
Thro' thick, and thro' thin, and thro, dirty and clean,
With patience, and labour, and puſhing for port,
W' arriv'd at the lofty pavilions of ——.
Here, fine painted coaches (the toys of the great)
Enter'd like lightning the wide open'd gate.
Such torrents of beauties, and beaus, I can't ſay
I ever did ſee, from my birth to this day.
Completely accoutred, the ſtern ſons of war,
With bayonets lifted, diſperſing afar
The curious vulgar; ſuch huge ſights to be ſeen,
The face of a ——, or the face of a ——.
No ſooner I entered, infatuation!
What a buſtle, and what a vociferation!
As by chance, in the ſtreet, had met half the nation.

But

But little attending to all that was ſaid,
I heav'd a ſad ſigh; clap'd my hand to my head:
Such grinning and bowing, ſuch ſcraping, I ſwear
I curs'd all my ſtars that I ever came there:
In a corner, cloſe huddled, laugh'd at my folly,
And indulged, by turns, a black melancholy.
Not all the gay viſions that fancy can frame,
Nor yet all the fair paths conducing to fame,
Would e'er again prompt me my quiet to ſport,
For th' empty deluſions of faſhion and ——.
As ever I thought in my private retreat,
The —— was the manſion of all that was ſweet;
A patron of learning, of virtue, of knowledge,
(The bubble of fools and proud boaſt of a college)
A topic I thought undeſerving of ſlander,
I broach'd; and applied to a certain by-ſtander.
'Twas genius, and merit, companions ſo rare,
As made my opponent moſt wonderful ſtare:
With a ſneering horſe-laugh my viſage he ey'd,
Then attempted to ſpeak—at laſt he repli'd,

Perhaps, my good Sir, you're in hiſtory read;
For merit, fool merit has long ſince been dead:
Whether ſhe truly was diſmiſs'd from the ——,
And expired with grief, they do not report:
Or if, on finding ſhe was unwelcome there,
Pride broke her ſad heart, and ſhe droop'd in deſpair:
For in old antique times (thoſe times now no more,)
Ev'n folk of good breeding did merit adore:
But ſince ſhe was treated the worſt of all hags,
And died in a ditch with hunger, and rags.
Did merit, d'y think, to the rudder advance,
Great Neſtor, appointed the ſcourger of France?
Deception may vouch it, but truth will declare,
Had he but his merit he ne'er had been there.
Here pauſed the courtier, who left his oration,
And me quite alone to my own obſervation.
Now fix'd were my eyes, nor for long could I tell,
That theſe very ſame eyes were fix'd on a belle;
'Till hoiſting her pinions, and ſteering about,
The trueſt conviction ſucceeded my doubt.

As

As florid as e'er ſat old mother red-cap,
Upon a poor ſign poſt, drinking her heel-tap.
Thus ſtood the young damſel, with paint all bedoizond:
With paint that well mixed old Satan had poiſon'd,
Her neck all bedaubed with faireſt of plaiſter,
Deceitfully ſhone, and appear'd alabaſter.
Hang down all your heads, oh ye lillies of vale!
'Tho pale y're by nature, with envy turn pale:
Dame Nature, 'tis true, you has faſhion'd moſt fair,
But nature with art could yet never compare.
Such a ſight was ne'er heard of, or before ſeen,
From Cæſar's invaſion, to William's dear Queen.
Too big for deſcription to take in at once,
Progreſſive we'll go, as at ſchool goes a dunce.
Like a cedar of Libanus, branching around,
And caſting a ſhade on the ſhrubs of the ground;
Or making a tranſit from great things, to little,
A true definition to give to a tittle,
As a poppy, whoſe head o'er charged with rain,
So feeble the ſtem that it ſinks on the plain;

Her

Her head was ſo large, that it fill'd with ſurprize,
Attracting all notice, attracting all eyes.
'Tho much I did ogle, and wonderful ſtare;
Scarce ought I diſcover'd but buckles and hair.
Had th' head from the body been ſever'd and laid
On the ground, almoſt all the world would have ſaid,
'Twas a ſtrange ſort of hedge-hog juſt crawld from's lair,
With fear and precaution, to ſniff up the air.
Oh! can nature diſguiſe the charms of a face,
To ſet the world laughing at beauty's diſgrace?
Here *boucles detachées negligées* did flow,
There ſeem'd all the graces of graces to grow.
Let Abſalom boaſt of his burden of hair,
Improved by nature, unfaſhion'd by care:
(The weight, if I'm right, was ſix pounds and four ounces,
Which ancient hiſtory a wonder announces)
Were the parricide here, his mind he'd becalm,
And yield up in ſilence the prize of the palm.
Juſt as well might a horſe, preſuming too far,
The ears of an aſs with his own ears compare.

My heart heav'd with ſorrow, my eyes flow'd with tears,
So great was my pity, ſo various my fears.
Oh (thought I) for what crime this burden of hair
Inflicted? by Jove it can never be fair;
Alas! can a frail, a weak creature like this,
Have offended the laws: or acted amiſs?
Ye gods, for what cauſe ſuch a ſtigma, I ſay,
To ſtifle the charms of a face bright as day?
Has envy, dire fiend of the mortals below,
That certain companion of vice and of woe,
Such faſhions invented in height of deſpair,
To wrap up our beauties in bundles of hair?
With concern in my face, amaze in my eyes,
And maint other ſymptoms that mark'd my ſurprize,
I long had ſtood motionleſs, had it not been
For the drolleſt adventure that ever was ſeen.
Lo a tremendous tall youth, of Mars own ſect,
Th' apartment now enter'd with ſeeming reſpect;
Elaſtic he ſprings, and he bounds like a doe,
His burden ſupporting on point of the toe:

Now briſkly advancing he bows to the fire,
And now he begins with ſlow pace to retire;
Unthinking of ſuch a misfortune, alas!
As, quite unexpected, did next come to paſs.
What planet tranſcendent at's birth did preſide,
In this very moment, I cannot decide;
Nor fortune, nor favour it e'er could betoken,
Or elſe its decrees were moſt certainly broken.
Oh madneſs! oh fury! what annals won't tell
The woeful miſhap which the fair one befel?
For whilſt in retreating, the ſtring of his breech,
No longer in compact, its charge did impeach;
Foul fear of diſgrace ſtood commander in chief,
So reaching his hand for a ſource of relief,
Juſt as from the mud's ſurface a ſprightly bream,
Attempting in vain to leap into the ſtream;
Still ſtriving with ardour t'attain the clear flood,
He flounces and flounders more deep in the mud.
Thus far'd the ſad ſpark, by the ſwing of his arm;
(A lady decoiſing was no little harm)

In

In the hair of the fair one his button engaging,
(A terrible evil! worſe evil preſaging!)
What woeful misfortune that moment befel,
The muſes all bluſh the dire ſecret to tell:
Yet for ever ſincere, they deal not in lies,
Untruths are moſt fitting the fooliſh, unwiſe:
With pulling and hauling, off came cap and feather,
The peruque, and pins, and hair altogether.
Not bellowing Io, watchful Argus ſlain,
(Her truſtieſt keeper on a foreign plain)
To Iſis transform'd, as old ſtories relate,
Was half ſo ſurpriz'd as our youth at the *tete*:
Nor did the pierc'd heifer her fate more bemoan,
Than our frantic damſel the loſs of her cone.
Such a curſed miſhap no politeneſs could cure,
Such a curſed miſhap no virgin endure.
Had C——d's ſelf, with the graces ſurrounded,
Been there, e'en the graces had all been confounded.
Now diſpers'd on the ground, the trophies behold!
Thoſe trophies that erſt grac'd the head of a ſcold.

There

There lies a grey lock interſperſed with yellow,
The ſcandal, and outcaſt of ſome ſcabby fellow;
There Siam's own tint ſeems to rival the jet,
At a diſtance detach'd lies couch'd the old *tete*;
Whoſe ſtory is ſhort, for its maſter, poor ſoul!
Gav't to a *friſeur* for a full flowing bowl.
Here relics lay various upon the gay floor,
And there flew the ladies with haſte to the door.
Whilſt all in a titter the —— ſtood around,
I ſtoop'd with ſubmiſſion, and reach'd from the ground,
The remnants of wigs, of horſes, of dogs tail,
And thouſands of compounds that lay thick as hail.
What raſcals are barbers! no hair can withſtand:
But where is the wonder, when ſuch the demand?
Too ſoon the bold ſeizure I truely repented,
Tho' with odorous perfumes moſt ſweetly ſcented;
From their covert diſlodg'd by the ſhock of the fall,
Fleas, and bugs march'd in companies o'er the hall:
Quite puny, and faint, they all limped about,
And hobbled along like old age in the gout:

With

With powd'ring and ſcenting, and fretting, and greaſing,
And other quaint modes, and faſhions of teaſing,
But a trifling remnant of life, did remain
To thoſe poor little animals crawling in pain.
Not with more proweſs, half fatigu'd, ſick, and ill,
Did Siſyphus labour't the foot of the hill.
In tatters the wool, and ſome other black ſtuff,
Such as pieces of old hat, and pieces of muff,
To the ſhoes of the courtiers lovingly ſtuck;
The *tete* ſo enormous to the knee of a buck:
As a grenadiers cap, where taper'd ſo fine,
The taſſel and buckle did mutual combine;
The forſaken old *tete*, with envy long ey'd,
For two or three yards was dragg'd cloſe by his ſide;
Which he ſtoop'd to reach up in eager deſpair,
And cram'd in's pocket to preſent to his fair,
So ſcarce, ſo genteel, is a preſent of hair:
So ſcarce and genteel, that I really was told,
An ounce and a half for two guineas were ſold.
No more can French lap-dogs or parroquets pleaſe,
Moſt welcome the *friſeur* all cover'd with greaſe:

Avec ſa poudre rouge, et ſon habit gris:
Oh! tout et charmant, a-la-mode de Paris.
Nought but madneſs alone, excuſe could I find,
T' account for the trappings the fair left behind;
As ſometimes we do ſee in Bedlam's ſad cell,
Straw crowns, with ſtraw ſceptres, and a tinkling bell,
Deem'd charming and pretty to diſſipate care,
Whilſt ſmiles of deriſion, denote the mad fair.
But on hearing a youth to pity the faſhion,
Quick kindled my blood, and I foam'd in a paſſion.
" The faſhion! elſewhere your romances diſpenſe,
" Theſe can't be the faſhions of women of ſenſe."
Tho' you foam, ſtamp, and rave, I ſtill do declare,
That faſhion demands a whole buſhel of hair.
Yet faſhion a madneſs, I freely will own,
And by the ſequel it ſhall plainly be ſhewn;
When late laſt night from the Opera returning,
Quite wrapt up in muſic, with muſic ſtill burning;
An employment more hideous, (horrid to look on)
Than buſineſs I found employed the cook on,

No

No mortal e'er ſaw from the ſpheres of his eyes:
I gazed with wonder, quite mute with ſurprize.
Here truſty old Cerberus ill at his eaſe,
(Vile hoſtile invaſion aſſaulting his peace)
Submitted his carcaſs, to's favourite fair,
Whilſt ſhe ply'd the ſciſſars to ſnip off his hair.
Let ancient bards ſing of the ſheering of ſheep,
In ages of gold how their flocks they did keep,
Rills, muſic, and murmur, inviting to ſleep:
Still themes of more import my muſes invite,
The ladies will pay, I their actions recite:
To join in my chorus, Euterpe incline,
Attend the gay ſong all ye muſes divine.
Another more cruel, pretty dear minion!
Of my old gander had cropped the pinion.
What in hell is the matter? are you then raving?
What means all this plucking, this ſnipping and ſhaving?
Like a pillar I ſtood, from reaſons ſo various,
If I ſaw, or ſaw not, I thought it precarious.

With

With tone, ſoft as Venus t'Adonis e'er ſpoke,
Suſannah reply'd I'll unravel the joke:
Then learn, my dear miſtreſs with charges ſevere,
(At whoſe haughty mandates I tremble with fear)
Thus iſſu'd her orders with face unſerene,
(For paſſion and rage, were moſt plain to be ſeen.)
To night I inſiſt lazy creatures you ſleep not,
Nor e'er ſhall you reſt till a *tete* I have got:
Don't think me too urgent, but pity my fate,
And patient attend what I next ſhall relate.
Alas the ſad preſage! I e'er ſhall remember,
It happen'd upon the eighteenth of December.
Diſſolved from Morpheus, I roſe in my bed,
And look'd with delight t'wards the ſpoils of my head;
Pale fear ſeiz'd my cheeks, and all preſent may tell,
In twanging the cord, when I tingled the bell,
How Betty came running in height of deſpair;
Oh! ſhall I ſurvive then the loſs of my hair?
The toilet derob'd, and its dear charming charge,
Lay all ſtraggled about on the floor at large:

Juſt in a by-corner wide gap'd a large hole,
Where a rat, there's no doubt, my eye-brows had ſtole:
But I ſoon ſhall replace that trifling miſhap,
For him, there's no doubt, I ſhall catch in a trap;
And had but my dire loſs no farther extended,
All quickly were well, and in haſte my grief ended,
For the hair of a rat, or a mouſe I well ween,
Make the fineſt brown eye-brows that ever were ſeen.
Had my *tete* been ſecure, I ne'er had repin'd,
Then my ſtomach were good, and well had I din'd!
But why all my grievance recapitulate?
All loſſes are loſt, in the loſs of my *tete*.
The pride of my topping, delight of all eyes!
That *tete* which attempted to rival the ſkies;
Whence Cupid, the god, and deſtroyer of hearts,
With rancour elancing the keeneſt of darts,
Sat ſmiling in ambuſh: tho' all felt the wound,
The ſeat of the villain was never yet found.
But too ſhort is the date of grandeur and glory,
See, ſee the dear relics ſtill ſmoaking before ye!

The rat, filthy vile rat no mercy poſſeſſing,
Has raviſh'd my tranſport, my comfort, my bleſſing:
The candle has ſeiz'd it, Suſannah ſupport!
In my arms here ſhe languiſh'd, in vain made effort
Some threats to denounce, ſtill bent on the miſhap,
Now heav'd out a ſigh, and exclaimed, a trap!
As dead, to appearance, ſome moments ſhe lay,
Then lifted her eyes, and again ſunk away:
Quite mute in the chamber we ſtood all around,
Whilſt with cheeks pale and wan ſhe lay ſtretch'd in a
ſwound:
But when to her ſenſes once more ſhe return'd,
And found 'twas in vain, all in vain that ſhe mourn'd;
As ſoldiers that ſuffer a breach by miſhap,
Employ all their fineſſe to fill up the gap;
As ſoon as the lady recover'd her ſenſes,
Her mandates ſhe iſſues, her orders diſpenſes.
So here you behold us, with labour and care,
Induſtriouſly working the breach to repair.

Now excuſe me, ye fair, your ſex I adore;
Your patience a moment, a moment implore:
I laugh but at faſhions, at things that may change,
At things that ſurpaſſing all wonder are ſtrange:
Misfortunes I pity, there candour admit,
At folly, or faſhion, allow not a bit.
Like Mercury, perhaps, ſome age hence may boaſt,
A beautiful damſel, the pride, and the toaſt
Of yonder fine city, the ſeat of bleſt ſcience,
Old faſhions commanding to ſtand at defiance;
Who with wings to her heels, will ſoar to the ſkies,
And leave us all gazing in grief and ſurprize.

FINIS.